

Dear Ms. Coyne:

Thank you for your comments before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Davenport, Iowa, on August 13, 2002. In your statement you expressed your opposition to the construction of 1200-foot locks based on your concerns for the environmental health of the Upper Mississippi River System (UMRS).

The missions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have evolved over the years to address the changing needs of the nation and as directed by Congress, as have the ways of accomplishing the mission. Central to the water resource mission is the goal to achieve sustainable communities, economics, and ecosystems. Meeting this goal requires the Corps to balance the needs of flood control, navigation, hydropower, environmental protection and restoration, and the management of natural resources.

Legislation passed in 1986 and 1990 established environmental preservation and restoration as one of the primary missions of Corps water resources projects. This legislation has allowed the nation to initiate environmental activities to enhance or restore natural resources at Corps projects. An example of an ongoing program to preserve and restore critical habitats within and along the Upper Mississippi River System is the Environmental Management Program. This program has been successful; however, more is needed to stabilize and restore the river's ecosystem. The Corps is working closely with other Federal and state agencies and environmental interests to define these additional needs as part of the restructured navigation study. Additional

-2-

information on the Environmental Management Program can be found at <http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/EMP/default.htm>.

The Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway (UMR-IWW) System Navigation Study has been restructured to give equal consideration of fish and wildlife resources and navigation improvement planning consistent with recommendations from the National Research Council and the Federal Principals Group. The restructured study will ensure the UMR-IWW system continues to be a nationally significant ecosystem and a nationally

significant commercial navigation system as designated by Congress. The restructured study will address the navigation efficiency needs of the UMR-IWW, the ongoing cumulative effects of navigation, and the ecosystem restoration needs with a goal of attaining an environmentally sustainable navigation system. An alternative for a 12-foot channel is not being considered in this study. The full economic and environmental evaluations necessary to support a potential recommendation for construction of navigation improvements and implementation of ecosystem restoration measures will be completed by October 2003. These potential plans will be presented at a series of public meetings beginning in October 2003 to gain public input prior to making a final recommendation. The final feasibility report is currently scheduled for completion in 2004. For more information and details concerning the UMR-IWW System Navigation Study, please refer to the Rock Island District website at <http://www2.mvr.usace.army.mil/umr-iwwsns/>.

Thank you again for your presentation before the Commission. We appreciate your concern and interest in the health and sustainability of the UMRS ecosystem and look forward to hearing from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Don T. Riley
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
President Designee, Mississippi
River Commission